

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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BROWNIE'S PLOT.

A SERIAL STORY.

By the Author of "Lucy Carter."

CHAPTER XL.

BROWNIE MAKES AN INVESTMENT.

ON the following Thursday Mr. Anderson was dining at Eastwood. Mr. Litton's absence had been prolonged beyond his anticipation, and, as she sat in the drawing-room a little after nine o'clock, Mrs. Northcott speculated whether her brother would arrive by the train which was nearly due.

"I wish you had more control over that animal, Margaret," she said, frowning at Lion, who lay at full length on the hearth-rug. "He never used to growl in that way."

Brownie was not in the best of spirits, for she had been compelled to write asking Clement not to come again to Mrs. Clow's.

"Uncle Walter must have come back, auntie," she answered. "I had better chain him up;" and she whistled to Lion to follow her. Upon her return to the drawing-room she found that her suspicion was correct. Mr. Litton had already made his appearance. His right arm was suspended in a silk scarf, instead of the more clumsy leather case, and altogether his appearance was neater than when we first made his acquaintance; although there was still a certain devil-may-care air which led you to think him the most open-hearted, ingenuous fellow in the world.

"I do hope you have enjoyed your visit," said Mrs. Northcott, but he waved the suggestion aside as though it were quite beneath him.

"Thank you, Mary; but I did not go

for enjoyment. Not so soon, you know; I shouldn't think of such a thing."

"Dear Walter!" murmured Mrs. Northcott.

"Well, why did you go to London, Uncle Walter?" enquired Brownie, with becoming simplicity.

"I went on business, Margaret," he replied, in a tone calculated to impress every hearer with the great importance of that business.

"You have never told us that Uncle Walter had any business, auntie," she persisted; whereupon Mrs. Northcott—herself tantalised by curiosity—reproved her niece for the impertinence of the remark.

"No matter, Mary," said Mr. Litton, "we invite enquiry. Enquiry is the breath of our nostrils, so to speak. If you will excuse me a minute, there is something—a little parcel in fact—I won't be a minute."

Maud closed the album she had been showing to Anderson, and they all awaited Mr. Litton's return with much curiosity. He did not keep them long, and, in a few moments Anderson was assisting him to unfasten a small brown paper bundle, from which he took a still smaller packet, handing it to his sister.

"Mary," he began excitedly, and appearing actually to shine with enthusiasm, "I meant to have asked you to accept this trifle a long time ago. But, what with my accident and poor Northcott's death you will forgive the delay, won't you? After all it is a mere bagatella."

"Oh, Walter!" she exclaimed, when she had removed the tissue-paper covering, "how very kind of you. How beautiful—lovely! What a pity I am in mourning."

"Why, it is a nugget," said Maud, leaning forward to admire the present. "Did

you bring it with you from North America, uncle?"

"Yes, Maud, yes—certainly; from my own mine. It is nothing—nothing at all; a mere bagatelle. Only virgin gold; nothing of any consequence. A mere bagatelle."

Whilst Mrs. Northcott continued to admire the nugget, and to thank the donor, Mr. Litton took a second and larger parcel from the brown paper and handed it to Maud, watching her as she unfolded her treasure with his face as flushed and his eyes as bright as they often were by that hour in the evening.

"This," he explained, "is only a little specimen of gold in the quartz. You can see the veins—there, you see. Pretty, aren't they, Maud? Look, Anderson. We crush it all up together, you know, and separate the gold-dust from the rest by means of quicksilver. Gold has an affinity to quicksilver—of course you know that. Lucky quicksilver, eh? Now it is your turn, Maggie," he continued, when Maud had duly thanked him. "Last, but not least, you know. Humph! I am sorry I haven't a better specimen to offer you; unfortunately, I did not put these things up myself. I left it to some one else, and this is the result. It is a piece of simple quartz, you see. Never mind; it isn't the value of a present, is it? It is the same kind of quartz as Maud's, only without the gold; that's the only difference. It is very chaste, isn't it?—all white, you see. If you put the two together under a glass-case, and stand Maud's in front—eh?—nobody will be any the wiser."

"I shall value it because it has come from your own mine, Uncle Walter," said this contented girl—"your very own."

"That's so," he answered, taking two or three sheets of paper from his pocket. "If you read one of these it will tell you all about it. You'll find it interesting, I can assure you. We are going to make the affair into a Company. I was never a greedy man—"

"Nobody could ever say that of you, Walter," said Mrs. Northcott, looking at her nugget.

"Thank you, Mary," he continued; "I rather think not. Thank Heaven, I'm always ready to share what I have with others. Who those others are to be," he added, looking around him, shrewdly, "must, of course, depend upon themselves. It would certainly be gratifying to know that I was benefiting my own flesh and blood—"

"That is so like you, dear Walter."

"Yes, I think it is, Mary—I hope it is. But, as I say, there is no compulsion. There it is—first come, first served. If those who are near and dear to me don't choose to take advantage of such a—I may say—golden—ha! ha!—such a golden opportunity, so much the worse for them. Just put one of those prospectuses in your pocket, Anderson. When you read it it will make your mouth water."

"And I have always said you were unfortunate, Walter!" exclaimed Mrs. Northcott, with an air of disappointment; at which Mr. Litton showed his black teeth, and chuckled audibly. Then, it being past ten o'clock, Anderson took his leave.

On the following Tuesday morning, Mr. Litton was alone in the study, a mass of loose papers on his right, a half-finished box of Clement's Intimidads on his left. He was disturbed by a tap at the door, and at once bundled most of the papers into a drawer.

"What, Margaret!" he exclaimed, "I thought you had all gone out."

"I wanted to speak to you, so I remained at home," she replied. "Perhaps you are busy?"

"Well, you know, I am rather busy," he said, holding the door only half-open so as to bar her entrance. "Won't it keep, Margaret; won't another time do as well?"

He regarded Brownie as a thorn in the flesh; for although she had lately seemed bent upon ingratiating herself with him, yet at times she had gone very near to offering him direct insults. He had also overheard her teaching Lion to growl at the mention of his name, and to whine when he heard Clement's.

"Oh yes, my business will keep," she answered, observing that he was gradually closing the door upon her. "I only wanted to speak about the mine—"

What a transformation! The words were a talisman. Wide open flew the door; back stepped its guardian, waving Brownie to a chair with the air of a polite dentist.

"So you want to say something about the mine. The prospectus has interested you? I drew it up myself, Margaret; I think it's pretty well done. Perhaps you want me to point out the exact locality on the map. Nothing easier, if you can only show me a map with it on, my dear girl."

"I think I understand whereabouts

the mine is," she answered, "only I thought there were shares or something. If you don't mind, I should like to have a few. But if you would rather I did not, of course, it does not matter at all."

"My dear Margaret!" he cried, reproachfully. "You remember what I said the other evening. It is always the greatest pleasure to me to help my friends. Whether those friends are worth the trouble is another matter. Now, how many shares would you like?"

"I have not much money," she said, "how much are they, please? How many do you think I might take, just to begin with?"

"There are two thousand shares at ten pounds per share," he answered, consulting the prospectus; "four pounds payable on application, four on allotment, after which it is hoped no further call will be made. Now, as a friend, Margaret, I can't advise you to take fewer than ten. Ten I consider a very moderate number. You could not take fewer than ten, with what I call decency, you know. You will just fill up a form I shall give you. Have you got your cheque-book? That's right. Well, then, you will draw a cheque for forty pounds. Four pounds a share, you know, and then the whole thing is done with for the present. The shares will soon be allotted; then you will draw another little cheque for forty pounds; four pounds per share on allotment. You see, the whole thing is as simple as ABC."

"But," said Brownie, "I am afraid I can hardly spare eighty pounds this quarter."

"Oh, oh, so you are extravagant, are you? My little niece spends her money as fast as she gets it, does she?" he exclaimed, in great glee, as he rested his hand on her shoulder.

"I have only two hundred pounds a year of my own," she answered, rising abruptly, and thus shaking off his hand.

"When do you come of age, Margaret?" he asked.

"In November. I am a Guy, you know; my birthday is on the fifth."

"Then, I'll tell you what. Ha, ha; a Guy! Well it would be a pity to roast you, wouldn't it? Just give me a cheque for the first forty now, and sign this form of application, and I—yes, I will lend you the rest myself until your birthday. Then you can pay me back; and you might like to take a few more shares at the same time."

"Very likely," she said, and producing her cheque-book, she sat down to draw a cheque for forty pounds, payable to "Walter Litton, Esquire, or order." After which she also signed her name to a form of application for forty shares in the "New Colorado Wheel Reef Mining Company, Limited," in accordance with Mr. Litton's instructions.

"I am going to treat you just as if you were a total stranger, Margaret," he said. "There's no friendship in business. I shall write you a receipt in proper form, just as though I had never seen you before."

Slipping the sling off his arm, he began slowly and clumsily to sign the receipt. The letters were large and round, like those of a schoolboy, and every line was shaky in consequence of the swollen condition of his fingers.

"There," he said, putting his arm carefully back in its sling, "put that back in your pocket, and think yourself a very lucky girl. I guess I could double that five thousand pounds of yours in a twelve-month, if you only came to me for advice. Double it? Ah, treble it."

"That is exactly what I should like to do," she replied. "I am so stupid over things of this kind. Uncle Walter, I don't want anybody to know about this—"

"My dear Margaret," he cried, seizing her right hand with his left and shaking it heartily, "you may trust me. I won't breathe a word. I am disappointed in the others, Margaret; especially in Maud—no spirit. I do like to see a little spirit in a girl."

"Wouldn't she take any shares when you asked her?" enquired Brownie.

"I didn't ask her. I ask nobody. I merely describe the mine and leave people to do as they like. A wonderful property—wonderful. But, as I tell you, Maud has no spirit. Upon my soul, Margaret, there is more sense in your little finger than in all the rest of them put together."

Throwing open the door, in his enthusiasm he would have bidden her farewell a second time.

"Thank you," she said; "but you did shake hands," and so she made her escape.

CHAPTER XII. INSPIRATION.

If any one had asked Brownie for what immediate reason she had taken those shares, she would have been puzzled to return a satisfactory answer.

Realising the difficulty of proving the negative proposition that Clement had not forged his father's name, it only remained to show positively that the crime had been committed by Mr. Litton—that is to say, by some one acting at Mr. Litton's instigation.

Brownie believed that the proceeds of that forgery had, amongst other things, furnished the means to purchase the presents alleged to have come from North America. Mrs. Northcott, who had much money to invest, had received the most valuable gift; Maud, possessing less, had received less; whilst Brownie herself, from whom little could have been expected, had been presented with a stone.

But not only with a stone; for affixed to its jagged side was a small blue and white label, such as a collector might use to number his specimens.

Anxious to learn all that was possible concerning Mr. Litton, Brownie began to perceive that she had been unwise to allow herself to appear in the least degree antagonistic towards him. However distasteful it might be to worm herself into his favour with the idea of betraying him, this seemed the most promising policy to pursue, and its first practical result was the investment of her small capital in the gold mine.

Mr. Litton, for his part, was too well versed in the reading of the human mind to be surprised at Brownie's conduct. Of course the prospect of gain was enticing to her, as it was to thousands of wiser persons. He had seen so many shrewd men of business give the lie to their former records upon the mere chance of gaining much for little at no expenditure of brain or body, that Brownie was classed with a crowd of other imbeciles.

Upon drawing up his blind the next morning, Mr. Litton saw that the long spell of fine weather was broken. It had lasted long enough to enable the farmers to carry their hay, and now the timely change would serve to fill the ears of corn before the sun came forth once more to ripen them for the sickle.

Helping himself to a mackintosh of Clement's, which still hung in the hall, Mr. Litton set forth to the bank for the purpose of cashing Brownie's cheque.

"Too soon to say I'm off to London, again," he muttered, as he came forth from Sir Edward Sparring's office; then drawing his cape carefully round him, he took a somewhat unfrequented road which led to Eastwood.

He had not gone many yards when he saw some one coming towards him at a swinging pace; some one whom he only too easily recognised. But there happened to be no turning between himself and the advancing foe; so, putting a bold face to the inevitable, he averted his eyes and continued his way.

But Clement did not intend him to do so without interruption.

"Let me pass, confound you!" exclaimed Mr. Litton, as the other stopped dead in front of him.

"You scoundrel!" cried Clement, glaring at him through the small waterfall which ran from the peak of his cloth cap.

"You know I can't defend myself," said Mr. Litton, putting his lame arm obtrusively forward, "or you wouldn't dare——"

"Wouldn't dare!" shouted Clement, who now had him by the throat, "you know better than that. I would not stay my hand from killing a mad dog because he was wounded; why should I spare a dangerous animal like you?"

It was all very well to reason in this manner; but the man was too badly handicapped for Clement to work his sweet will upon him with an easy conscience. With a hearty shove he sent Mr. Litton sprawling on the ground a few yards away. He regained his feet, and the two stood confronting one another, heedless of the sound of approaching wheels.

"Good morning, Clement!"

It was Mrs. Oliver, seated on the box-seat of her husband's high dog-cart, and looking charming, even in her waterproof.

"A delightful day, is it not?" she continued, as the groom jumped down to the horse's head. "My truant husband has sent a telegram for some things, and here am I, like a dutiful wife, taking them to the station myself. If you like to jump up, Clement, I will drop you at your rooms."

"When you came up," he said, "I was just thinking of——"

"Of going home out of the storm. The wisest thing you could do. You don't introduce me, so I shall act for myself. Mr. Litton, I have known you by sight for a long time. Your broken arm lends you distinction, you know. If Clement won't come with me, perhaps you will?"

He needed no second bidding; and, before Clement could realise the posi-

tion, Mrs. Oliver had thrown him a laughing good-bye, and driven off on the best of terms with Mr. Litton, congratulating herself upon her success in parting two men who were so plainly bent upon mischief.

Thanks to the training to which Brownie had been subjected by her uncle, she was very methodical in the keeping of her accounts, differing in this respect both from Clement and Maud, although they had been brought up under the same auspices. On the afternoon of the third of August, Brownie sat in her own room with an open account-book before her, a few cancelled cheques, some scraps of paper covered with sums in simple addition and subtraction, her banker's pass-book, and a bottle of eau de-cologne.

Perplexity was on her face as she examined the back of the cheque which she had paid to Mr. Litton—perhaps the largest she had ever drawn. Opening her desk, she brought forth the receipt which she had seen him sign, together with a soiled envelope that he had received during the earlier days of his incapacity, and the writer of which still occasionally wrote to him. Placing these three specimens of handwriting close together, she bent over them for a critical examination; then, tilting back her chair, and passing her fingers through her unruly hair in a very boyish fashion, she continued to stare abstractedly out of window.

Suddenly the chair stood firmly on its four legs again. Light had come to Brownie. "Eureka, eureka!" she might have cried, for, indeed, she believed—rightly or wrongly—that she had found that which she had been so long seeking.

Before rejoining Maud and Mrs. Northcott, she wrote a letter to Clement—in defiance of her aunt's command—asking him to meet her outside Mrs. Clow's door on the following Thursday.

Never was an invitation received more gladly, coming as it did after several weeks of utter dreariness. It was true that Mrs. Oliver had succeeded in charming him again into a good humour, with the result that Captain Oliver's note-book contained another of Clement's little bills; but life, as a whole, seemed flat, stale, and unprofitable, and many a time had he regretted Brownie's request that he would remain at Middleton.

Seldom had he seen Brownie look so happy, never so beautiful; whether her black dress lent her a charm, or whether

the dress itself was the debtor; whether the neat straw hat set off her face, or her sweet face set off the hat, Clement could not tell. As she came quickly to meet him, with her short, impulsive steps, with outstretched hands and flushed face, it was all he could do to hinder himself from falling at her feet and at once declaring himself her slave.

"Clement," she said, "I could not resist asking you to come, as soon as I had the least little bit of good news for you. Really, really, I do believe this trouble will not last much longer. Do be brave and hopeful just a little while——"

"And then, Brownie?"

"Then—oh—then—then you will be able to come home again, and everything will be just as it was before uncle's death."

"It can never be the same," he said, gloomily.

"Yes, yes, it can, Clement. I am sure I am on the right track, at last. I can see now—so clearly; the only difficulty is to prove it to the rest—to Henry Grayson, and all of them."

"Do you actually mean to tell me, that you know who forged the cheque, Brownie? that you know who actually wrote my father's name?"

"Yes," she said, "I believe I do know."

"For Heaven's sake, tell me then. I won't lose a second. I will expose the pair of them. Did he tell you that he met me the other day, and that I came within an ace of knocking the life out of him?"

"Yes—at least, I heard from auntie. If you act like that, you will spoil everything."

"You have not told me, Brownie. If you are so certain, tell me the scoundrel's name, and I will soon make his acquaintance."

"I cannot tell you yet," she answered. "You must take my word for it. I hold a clue; but I have no proof—nothing which would convince Henry Grayson. If I let you into the secret, I know what you would do; if my suspicion once became known, it would be met by ridicule, and never come to anything. But, I tell you that I know; I have made my first advance; and truly—truly, Clement, there need be no fear for the rest."

"Upon my word, it is too bad," Clement replied. "I thought that you knew for certain. A suspicion! What is the worth of a suspicion?"

"But, Clement, indeed, it is more than

a suspicion. It is a certainty; or, at least, it will be. Not if I were to tell you now, though; if I did that, the whole thing would end in nothing. I must have calmer counsel than yours—"

"Anderson's, of course," he exclaimed.

"Oh," she said, hastily, "I have not told you about Uncle Walter's gold mine. Look at those clouds, Clement; aren't they beautiful? Your troubles will pass away just so. Let us sit down here a little while."

They had taken the path across the fields, and were near to the lane again. Clement had not the least objection to prolong the interview.

"What do you mean by his gold mine?" he asked, holding her in his arms for one delicious moment, as he lifted her to the top bar of the stile.

Then she told him all about the presents. "Uncle talks of nothing else but his mine and Mrs. Oliver—your friend, you know, Clement. Yes, it is a wonderful mine; you dip your hand in, and out it comes full of nuggets."

"You don't suppose he will find any one who is fool enough to trust him with their money?" asked Clement.

"At any rate, I can name two fools," she laughed. "Captain Oliver, for one—"

"Not he," said Clement; "Oliver knows too well what he is up to."

"Captain Oliver is to be what they call a director," she continued, "and I am the other fool, Clement. I want to ingratiate myself with Uncle Walter, and that seemed the only way."

"Rather an expensive way, Brownie. If Oliver has taken shares, depend upon it, he has not paid for them. You need not fear his being made a victim; he is the last man in the world to be used as a cat's-paw."

"Uncle Walter is always at the Nook," she said. "He seems to know Captain Oliver very well. He says he met him in Colorado. Captain Oliver is constantly writing to him—about the mine, I suppose. Please don't say I told you they knew one another. Uncle is always singing Mrs. Oliver's praises; I suppose there must be something nice about her, or you would not all be so eager for her society. By-the-by," she added, descending from her seat on the stile, "Mrs. Butterworth said she should write to you. She is very anxious to see your face at the fête."

"I had the letter yesterday," he admitted.

"Then you can't refuse to go," she continued, as she sprang from the stile. "But, Clement, Uncle Walter is sure to accompany Maud and me. You won't take any notice of him, will you? No more thrashings, if you please. Not that I should mind his being thrashed. I should rather like it—when it is all over. You can't think how I abominate him!"

He accompanied her as far as he could, without running the risk of being seen by any one at Eastwood, and then left her, to return to his lonely lodgings in the High Street.

A GREAT NEED OF THE PRESENT AGE.

THIS is an age of unrest. The wheels of life are for ever thundering around us; and when the harness is not actually galling our shoulders, it is constantly ringing and rattling in our ears. Every trope that can illustrate strenuous endeavour, feverish haste, tumultuous confusion, and the discordant clamours of a myriad battling Egos, may be fitly employed to depict the chaotic pageant. Not only in the region of action, but in that of opinion, the same agitation prevails. Many are the victories which have been won by the armies of Light and Progress, and we duly celebrate them in hymns neither few nor modest. Infinite is the vista of progress before us. We have overcome apparent impossibilities; we have reconciled apparent contradictions in the physical and moral world. We call this nineteenth century the "glorious product of the ages," and are not absolutely devoid of self-consciousness in uttering the eulogium. But, with all the possessions we enjoy, and all the trophies we have won, one supreme good has eluded us. Life has become a worn and weary thing—and we need Repose.

We are sometimes tempted to think that when man discovered and applied steam and electricity he raised two devils, which have for ever enslaved him; and that a side of the truth, at all events, is observed in regarding him as one among the many complicated machines which are driven by their agency. We run the hot race of existence as best we can; but, however jaded our powers, we must quicken the pace in answer to the prick of the electric spur. The furnace of the steam engine communicates its heat to the blood of every passenger in the

train; and all the ways of life are railway ways.

Those exquisite lines in the opening to the "Castle of Indolence"—

A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the air which pass,
For ever flashing round a summer sky;
There eke the soft delights that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
And the calm pleasures, always hovered nigh;
But whate'er smacked of noyance or unrest,
Was far, far off expelled from this delicious nest,

come to us in these days with a soothing charm that is almost a physical sensation: "Voluptuous as the first approach of sleep."

Sometimes that humorous little Dutch picture, painted by "Diedrich Knickerbocker," seems, as we gaze and think, to receive us into its drowsy atmosphere; and there are times of mental and physical stress when we are inclined to envy those spherical old burgermeesters of New Netherlands the dozy quietude of their existence.

The governor was Mynheer Wouter van Twiller. "His face—that infallible index of the mind—presented a vast expanse unfurrowed by any of those lines and angles which disfigure the human countenance with what is termed expression. . . . His habits were as regular as his person: he daily took his four stated meals, appropriating exactly an hour to each; he smoked and doubted eight hours, and he slept the remaining twelve of the four and twenty. Such was the renowned Wouter van Twiller—a true philosopher; for his mind was either elevated above or tranquilly settled below the cares and perplexities of this world. . . .

"The province of New Netherlands, destitute of wealth, possessed a sweet tranquillity that wealth could never purchase. There were neither public commotions nor private quarrels; neither parties, nor sects, nor schisms; neither prosecutions, nor trials, nor punishments; nor were there counsellors, attorneys, catchpolls, or hangmen. Every man attended to what little business he was lucky enough to have, or neglected it if he pleased without asking the opinion of his neighbour. In those days nobody meddled with concerns above his comprehension, nor thrust his nose into other people's affairs, nor neglected to correct his own conduct and reform his own character, in his zeal to pull to pieces the characters of others; but, in a word, every respectable citizen ate when he was not

hungry, drank when he was not thirsty, and went regularly to bed when the sun set and the fowls went to roost, whether he was sleepy or not. . . . Everything, therefore, went on as it should do, and in the usual words employed by historians to express the welfare of a country, 'the profoundest tranquillity reigned throughout the province.'

The harassed mind experiences a sense of calm even from the delicious irony of a description like this. But the weariest spirit quickly revolts at the idea of a repose that is purely sensual. The well-fed lethargy of the worthy Dutchmen is by no means to be set up as an ideal existence. And Thomson, leading us through those scenes of delicious languor in the first part of his allegory, brings us at last to view the miseries of soul and corruption of mind which attend upon indolence. It is undeniably true, however, that, physically and mentally, we are overdriven. But it is not by any cavilling at the conditions of modern society that we can hope to remedy the evil. Competition is the all-pervading spirit of the day, and the complaints of Socialists and Professors will not weaken its terrific energy. So long as men place the supreme good of this life in the things external to themselves, so long will the present stress continue. But when they become simpler in their desires, as a consequence of becoming more intellectual in their thoughts and tastes, life will be more quiet and deliberate, and a higher stage in the progress of the race be reached. Therefore, the repose to be aimed at first is repose of the mind, and this can only be gained by making the intellect stronger in action and more delicate in perception, so that it may find its rest in itself, and thus be independent of more precarious and exhausting forms of enjoyment.

We do not allow ourselves time to think of these things. Our work is with "the madding crowd," and so are our pleasures. In truth

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.

The discordant clangour of all its competitive brass bands is distracting and unceasing. The air is redolent of the frivolous cigarette. The newspapers have marched their columns into the Sunday to possess it, and on that "sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright"—wherein, at least, we might mount the Hill Contemplation and converse with the great and kindly spirits of literature and poetry—we

turn our ears to the jargon of the race-course, or listen while politician shrieks against politician. One half of our life is vexed with the worry or consumed with the fevers of business, and the other half is debilitated by trivial amusements or unworthy excitements.

Except the maxims of religion, which come to us staled by custom, and polarised—to use a phrase of Oliver Wendell Holmes—by all that is formal and commonplace in our teacher and ourselves, we receive nothing that is calculated to give our minds buoyancy to rise above these worldly perturbations and rest in a calmer atmosphere.

The physicians may write their periodical admonitions in the "Nineteenth Century," and point to the increasing prevalence of nervous disorders; but it lies not with them to "minister to the mind diseased" of this age and generation. The malady is sedulously instilled by an education, which leads us to invest our all of mental endeavour and spiritual tranquillity in objects which are infinitely trivial in comparison with the price we pay for them.

While we think all those thoughts, feelings, actions, to be merely dreamy sentimentalities, which are not convertible into a money equivalent, or, which do not reflect some modern craze; while the primal duties and all the lovely charities of life are taught simply as duties, and without reference to their relation with the sense of beauty which underlies all human good, and without the due emphasis upon the pleasure and peace which their exercise bestows, we shall be at the mercy of our troubles. The reasoning faculty of the age is active enough; it is the cultivation of the poetic sense, in its largest conception, which can alone help us to gain a proper mental equilibrium. And without this sense it is impossible for us to have the true perspective and discern the relative real importance of the things which make up life.

Looking at the prevailing ideals and methods of education in the middle classes of society—perhaps the allusion might be carried further—we must be struck with the utter absence of any conception of its higher functions in developing that side of the child's mind, which should prove a pleasant retreat from the cares of the world. Parents imagine they are doing all that can reasonably be expected of

them in sending their children to a "good school." For the practical business of life a school alone can give the best preparation. But those gentle habits of thought which accustom the mind to delight in the visionary verities of the poet and storyteller have their value, and ought not to be left to the wild handling of chance. In some minds the fanciful needs pruning and directing; in others it needs stimulating. But we have no reason to doubt that its principle exists in all minds; and nowhere, surely, can its faculty be so well fostered as in the home, and through the interacting affection of father, mother, and child. The youngest mind is sensitive to a poetic and æsthetic influence, provided it is applied in a wise, unobtrusive way; not accompanied with grave, monitorial airs, but infused into the fresh, receptive spirit of the child through a hundred little home pleasures and duties. Childhood is the time, if ever, to form tastes and habits of thought which shall "grow with its growth, and strengthen with its strength." Richter in his "Levana" has minutely noticed the effect which the ordinary surroundings of the home may have upon the growth of an infant's mind. In a fine passage of the same work he has instanced the grand and enduring sentiments which the ceremonies of religion could create in the mind of a little boy when attendance upon them was not so much enjoined as a duty, but proposed as an indulgence. Indeed, the youngest mind is capable of receiving a great deal more in the shape of ideas than we, who find it so difficult to gain new ones, may well imagine. We can all recollect among our earliest memories the feelings of awe, wonder, or delight, which etherealised very ordinary circumstances. It is the duty of a parent both to expand and direct this sense of the poetic in his child; and as he strives to provide for the physical and material well-being of his offspring so ought he to aim at endowing it with a quiet, lovely tract of mind, as a pleasure and repose among the vicissitudes of its later life.

The culture of his mind, towards which every young man in the middle classes nowadays fancies he does a great deal, reproduces the sordidly utilitarian character of ordinary juvenile education. A language or two, and shorthand are mastered. Perhaps some cant of literary or musical criticism is learnt for

conversational purposes. It is of course very necessary that we should have some credit both with the banker and the world. But a culture which only has such objects is very meagre and unreal; and there is small evidence of the general cultivation of that quiet, self-dependent enjoyment of literature which is of such priceless value amid the frictions and discouragements of life. A very young man enters the world full of energy and confidence; and it is natural that he should look with some disdain at the maxims which imply defeat and disappointment. But when the evil days arrive, and troubles come hand in hand, the coarse habit of mind which learns only that it may earn, will not be that which can most easily feel the best consolation, or most readily respond to the highest encouragements. The miserable inadequacy of a man's educational accomplishments becomes thus apparent when he has to fly from himself into the distractions of society and amusement; or to retire into some miserable little brain-cell of self-sympathising sorrow, and chew the bitter-sweet morsels of misanthropic philosophy. In either case he has been led to depend too much on that which is apart from himself, upon the "milk and praise" of his friends, or on the fulfilment of his ambitions.

That is a very just point of view from which a man is appraised by his fellows, and which is necessarily the external point of view. But it should not be forgotten that there is another equally just point of view, from which he should regard himself and try to recognise his own value. From the former point he may be measured with tolerable ease. But to know what he truly is—that, indeed, is by no means so easy to the individual, while it is almost impossible to his critics. And it is on all hands very evident to us, from the low standard of mental pleasure with which men are satisfied, that they form a very erroneous estimate of their capacity for higher enjoyments.

Men are apt to think unduly well of some of their capabilities, and it is not unnatural in such cases that they should think unduly ill, or not at all, of others. It behoves a man who wishes to get the most happiness out of life, to appreciate himself, both with regard to his faculty for the higher pleasures, and for his actual and potential significance in the world. And if, with a sober mind, he pursues this train of thought, he will quickly come

to feel that the greatest masters lived, thought, and sang for him, and will not be content with the tickling interest of the ordinary modern novel. He will see that we have not yet outgrown the teachings of that "glorified slave," Epictetus, who expressed this self-regarding philosophy in the directing of conduct; nor of Plato, who did the same, more particularly in the directing of thought. And the sense of the beautiful swayed both, and the secret of tranquillity was with them.

While Epictetus teaches us that only those things are really in our power which are concerned with our becoming and being true and good, that, in rightly using them, we satisfy a natural craving of the soul, which, unsupplied, fills the life with a vague disquiet, we feel that there is a charm in the "divine philosophy" of ancient literature which, did we but take the pains to learn it, would keep the sky bright above us, and the air quiet around us amid all the storms of life.

The errors of the Stoic are not likely to be seconded by our impulses, while his noble appeals to the deep realities of our existence have a power to quicken and fortify the most languid spirit. A mind cultivated to a keen perception of the beautiful in art would crave no higher boon than the power to create that which it admires, and so express its own yearning to the ideal. A mind attuned to the music which Plato taught, the harmonious exercise of all its faculties, both in thought and life, would perceive that loveliness in conduct which is called virtue, and desire that generation in the beautiful which Socrates describes in the "Banquet" as the highest love. The Christian is not rendered less one by such studies, nor is the infidel made less amenable to the influences of religion.

If a man be accomplished in the sense of poetry, whether expressed in music, art, or literature, he will be the better able to distinguish between apparent realities and real ones; to apply a Berkeleyian philosophy to the things for which men fight, envy, and hate one another, and distinguish their futility by the touchstone of his tranquil mind. Thus his liability to disappointment will be diminished by the concentration of his desires upon that which is in his own power, and his independence of soul be increased, for he will feel that none of "the whips and scorns of time, the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's con-

tumely," can interfere with the enjoyments which the excursions of his mind through the fields of literature and art can afford him. He can retire at the end of every day's labour from all the sordid vulgarities and pettinesses which he may be compelled to endure, to a Palace Beautiful; and, by converse with the grand and lovely spirits of the past, be enabled to utterly forget the mean and despicable ones of the present.

There is nothing new in all this. It is a faint echo of a very old philosophy. Yet it ought to be remembered that even a truism is not necessarily a sufficiently comprehended truth. Familiarity with a phrase is one thing; the realisation of the truth which it expresses is quite another thing. An æsthetic movement, which was speedily damned by its own extravagances, was set on foot a few years ago. Its evangel was the culture of the beautiful. Yet this old idea, which if advocated in any form of words, would appear disgustingly trite, came with the force of the maddest of novelties when the attempt was made to apply it in some concrete form to the actual surroundings of men. And if the eccentricities of the æsthetic school partially explain the astonishment with which their gospel was first received, they also prove how signally the preachers themselves failed to grasp the significance of the old doctrine. It is not so much by the machinery of "schools" and "cults" and "movements," and reading-society "culture" competitions, as by the silent, gradual influence of a better home-education, and a diffusion of higher literature among the upper and middle-classes, that this sense of the reality of poetry and literature can be created and sustained. As the feeling prevails, its influence will extend through all the intricacies of life. Men will become more solicitous to enjoy their lives, and less anxious to increase their fortunes as they become capable of the most enduring pleasures, and find them the least expensive. The frantic rush to El Dorado will abate, for succeeding generations will prefer to wander at sunset along the banks of the Ilyssus or the Avon.

"We must not expect Philosophy to produce with one stroke of the pen the converse effect to that which Rubens produced when he converted a smiling child into a weeping one with one stroke of his brush. It is sufficient if she converts the

soul's deep mourning garb into half-mourning."

Thus Richter. And though this cultivation of our faculties for delight in poetry and beauty everywhere—in pleasant green fields and shining rivers; in happy faces; in the mighty harmonies and tender strains of music; in the loveliness and grandeur, varied as human nature, of literature, with all its accompaniments of laughter and tears—though this culture cannot divest us of our human liability to the burden and heat of these feverish days, it can, at any rate, for every evening-time, provide "a bower quiet for us, and a sleep Full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breathing."

ROUND ABOUT PARIS.

SAINT GERMAIN AND SAINT DENIS.

AT Saint Germain one breathes again. Heat, and dust, and turmoil are left behind as the pleasant heights are reached. Life goes easily at Saint Germain, about which something of well-bred dignity and repose seems still to spread a charm. And for surroundings, where should we find anything to equal the grand terrace, with its calm shade and royal magnificence of extent? In front stretches the fertile river plain, where the Seine pursues its winding way, with tufted banks reflected here and there in quiet reaches. On one hand appears the aristocratic little settlement of Maisons, where charming villas appear, seen among the trees of the park of the fine old château. In another direction the view is bounded by the woody heights of Marly-le-Roi. Bright gleams of the river show on either side of the dark woods of Vesinet. Far away in the distance, rises the hill of Montmorency, which gives its name to the proud family that claims the title of first Baron and first Christian of France; and there, too, rises the spire of Saint Denis, the warning finger that pointed out mortality to the royal owners of these noble domains.

And as evening approaches, and the great river plain is suffused with a roseate glow, and woods in velvet tufts, and meadows, and lines of poplars, and village spires, and gloomy château with geometric lines of avenues are scattered here and there on the fair landscape, the hill of Montmartre shines out over the dusky haze of Paris, and Fort Valérien on the other side mounts guard over the city.

There, too, the Arch of Triumph—outlined against the sky—reveals itself as the noble portal of the magnificent city; and the gilded dome of the Invalides shines out from the gathering gloom. And we may watch for the electric beam that is to shine from the Eiffel Tower, announcing the crowded, glittering fête below, of which the gay whirl contrasts so strongly with the tranquillity of these quiet shades.

About the terrace of Saint Germain linger still the memories of the exiles of a lost cause. Here they paced and talked—the banished lord, the exiled courtier, the soldier serving under an alien flag. To some, the scene would recall the links of Forth, as seen from old Stirling town; but to him the scene would be wanting in so much that made up the beauty of his own home landscape.

The sun shines bright in France,
And fair sets he;
But he has tint the blink he has
In mine ain countree.

Sad and gloomy indeed was the Court of the exiled King, where priests and confessors had everything their own way. But the King was nobly lodged by the munificence of Louis le Grand, and as for being a pensioner of the French King, that was a circumstance that must have sat lightly enough on the mind of a Stuart. But for those faithful followers who had sacrificed everything for the King, there was but scanty welcome at Saint Germain unless they were of the monkish sort.

Of the old palace, in which King James the Second spent the years of his exile, only a single pavilion remains, which forms part of a restaurant, greatly resorted to by the Parisians, who, if they trouble themselves at all about its associations, have more to say about the bonhomme, Henry the Fourth, who built it: the gay monarch who was always gallanting or gambling, and always in want of money for both pursuits; but whose charitable desire, that every cottage dame should have a chicken in her pot-au-feu, has earned him more good-will than perhaps he deserves.

The Château Neuf, from Henry's time, became the chief country seat of the French Kings, till Louis the Fourteenth forsook it for Versailles; deserting one of the finest sites that can be imagined for a noble palace, in favour of one essentially commonplace and mean. When our King James took up his residence in the Château Neuf, he was, perhaps, better

lodged than he had been in any of his own palaces.

In this house he died, in 1701, and his widow, Marie d'Este, seventeen years afterwards.

With the death of Louis the Fourteenth and the Regency of the Duc d'Orléans, the attitude of the French monarchy towards the House of Stuart changed altogether, and James Edward—whom Louis had formally recognised as the heir of England, at a death-bed visit he paid to James in the same Château—ceased to be a welcome guest.

As to the building itself—the home of the exiled King—it owed its final destruction to the orders of the Comte d'Artois, afterwards Charles the Tenth, who, in 1776, had it pulled down, intending to rebuild it upon a more magnificent scale. But circumstances put a stop to this—very serious circumstances, in the way of revolution and exile.

As for the old Château, which stands in more intimate relations with the town, and which was long the favoured home of the old French Kings, its fortunes have been more varied. There was an older Château once upon the site, with memories of Saint Louis and the Crusades, and even earlier days. But that was burnt and destroyed by our Black Prince, who might have earned his name from the black patches of fire and rapine that he left as his marks upon fair France. But Francis the First was the real founder of the present edifice. The Château still exists, restored to its ancient form, and utilised as a public museum of antiquities, after having suffered many strange changes and adversities. It is Francis who gives the key-note to the dominant impressions made by this relic of old France—Francis the gay and debonair, who rides forth to meet our Harry the Eighth on the Field of the Cloth of Gold: Francis, who loses all but honour on the fatal field of Pavia: Francis, the founder of Havre de Grace, and who built a big ship there—the biggest ever known, bigger than our "Harry Grace à Dieu"—which contained a tennis-court within its lofty wooden walls; a ship so big that she could never be got afloat, but rotted on the slips where she was built.

The once gay and stirring monarch had fallen prematurely old and decrepit before his death, so that his young mistress, the Duchesse d'Etampes, had become the chief influence in the kingdom. With the death of the old King and the accession of his

son Henry, naturally the aspect of affairs was altogether changed. Now it was the young King's elderly mistress, Diane de Poitiers, who was virtually the ruler of the kingdom.

In the intrigues and imbrolios among those who worshipped the setting or the rising sun, originated a quarrel, which was settled by a judicial combat, the scene of which was the plateau in front of the old castle.

Among the most favoured courtiers of the late reign had been Guy, Vicomte de Jarnac, the brother-in-law of the Duchesse d'Etampes, and, if the scandal of the Court was to be believed, connected with that lady by less avowable ties of sentiment and affection. Anyhow, he was the chosen champion of the Duchesse, and the shafts of his wit had often rankled in the retentive mind of Diane. Her age, her supposed infirmities, had been made the subjects of ridicule in the intimate circle about the old King. The counter-stroke was subtle and feminine. De Jarnac's father had married a second wife, young, rich, and charming. Certain innocent words of De Jarnac, as to the kindness shown him by his stepmother, were twisted by the Dauphin into a sinister meaning. Everywhere Henry spread the cruel rumour—that De Jarnac had been guilty of the vilest conduct. De Jarnac, finding out or guessing the source of the evil things that were said against him, denounced, in the presence of the Dauphin, the author of the scandal as a mean and despicable coward. A champion was at hand to take up the challenge. A chosen friend of the Dauphin was one François de la Chataigneraye, the cadet of a noble house, one of the best swordsmen and strongest men of his day—a man of steel and iron, who could overthrow the best of the Bretons in a wrestling match, and meet on equal terms the cunningest Italian professor of fencing. This bravo, who had been the hero of many combats, out of which he had always come successfully, took everything upon himself. He had made the injurious statement; he maintained it; and what then?

De Jarnac sought permission of the old King to fight his slanderer, but was peremptorily refused. And now his life became a burden to him. Everywhere he met with insults, ridicule, taunts. His father, his stepmother, his whole family shared in his disgrace; and the death of the old King, which was so unfavourable

to his worldly interests, came to him as a relief from an intolerable state of things. Among the first who presented themselves to demand favour from the new monarch, were the old Comte de Jarnac and his son, praying that the latter might be permitted to vindicate his own and his father's honour, by ordeal of battle with his accuser. The prayer was at once granted, and preparations were made for the combat, which was to take place on the open ground in front of the Château, and to the east of it. The day was fixed—it was the tenth of July, 1547—and the Court of the young King and of Diane prepared to celebrate its triumph, for nobody doubted but that the result of the fight would be an easy victory for the King's champion, and death to his opponent.

De Jarnac prepared himself devoutly for his approaching end. He was taller than his adversary, but of delicate frame and no great strength—a mere vase of porcelain opposed to a vessel of solid brass. The brawny hero of the Court went about everywhere ridiculing his foe and rehearsing his approaching triumph. De Jarnac, meantime, while making his peace with Heaven, did not neglect his preparations for the combat. The women who were interested in his welfare secured a renowned professor of fencing from Italy—one skilled in every feint and device, and acquainted with cunning thrusts of which he alone had the secret. The Italian studied Chataigneraye as an artist studies his model, marked his strong points and his weak ones; the latter, indeed, almost wanting, except that from an old wound one of his arms—not the sword-arm it seems—moved a little stiffly.

The news of the judicial combat of Saint Germain had spread all over France with the scandal that occasioned it; and everywhere the conditions and probabilities of the fight were discussed. The poorer noblesse of the provinces travelled up in shoals to become witnesses of the combat; figures in old pourpoints, and mounted on ancient Rosinantes, who camped out in the adjoining forest, dining on dry bread moistened with water from the brook. The higher nobility displayed themselves in gorgeous equipments, with bands of gentlemen about them all radiant in their patrons' colours.

As the day approached, Paris itself came bodily on the scene with all her mummings and maskers, her brawling students, her mutinous artisans, her sturdy bourgeois, her lawyers and doctors in their

long black robes, with all the numberless traffickers and loungers of her streets. Men, women, and children all poured upon Saint Germain, so that the scene resembled a gigantic fair, the turmoil and confusion, the laughter, horse-play, and scurrilous jests contrasting strangely with the stern grim purpose of the meeting.

At six in the morning the lists were opened, the crowd took their places, the nobility arranged according to degree on stands and stages, the general crowd hustling each other at the barriers, while the windows and roofs of the palace were crowded with more or less privileged spectators.

Everything was done according to established precedent, as handed down from the days of ancient chivalry. In his richly-broidered tabard, Guienne herald-at-arms marches out to meet the assailant De la Chataigneraie, who enters the lists amid loud flourishes of trumpets and the ruffle of drums, led by his sponsor, François de Guise, and followed by a train of three hundred gentlemen in his colours of white and crimson. Round the camp the whole cavalcade ambles gracefully, and then the champion retires to his tent. He is as gay as a bridegroom, and so confident of the result that he has invited the whole Court to supper at the end of the battle. The tables are already laid, bright with silver and porcelain. The King had a fine taste in faience, as collectors know who prize the Henry Deux ware with the interlaced crescents, the symbol of the fair Diane, above gold and rubies.

De Jarnac made his entry in more modest fashion. He had ordered his grave, and paid for masses for his soul, and expected to sup that night in Paradise. But as he rode round the lists the voices of the people cheered him. He was their champion after all; they hated the cold Diane, who thought of nothing but fleecing them. The country nobles, too, gave him their voices. But from the royal tents and the tribunes where sat the King and Diane in her scornful beauty, no word of greeting or encouragement was heard.

All the long, hot summer's day was occupied in settling the preliminaries of the fight. According to the ancient laws of the duello, valid still where the duel is an existing institution, the choice of weapons rests with the person assailed whether in honour or in person—in this case De Jarnac. By the advice of the Italian professor, he demanded the use of

the panoply and weapons which had long since gone out of use in single combats, the heavy lance and long-pointed double-edged swords, the coat of mail, the gauntlets and bucklers of steel. Each item of the list was the subject of long and animated discussion. The knowing ones blamed the advisers of De Jarnac for insisting on this cumbrous array, in which the strength and vigour of his brawny adversary would give him every advantage. But the books and records of the heralds showed that such had been the equipment in former judicial combats, and point by point was conceded in favour of De Jarnac's contention. The judges who decided were the Marshals of France, and the Grand Constable was the ultimate referee.

The discussion lasted till seven in the evening, and, with heat, fatigue, and expectation, the spectators, as well as the actors in the ceremony, had reached a point of feverish excitement. Then it was announced that all was settled. The lists were cleared; the heralds proclaimed the combat; trumpets sounded; the combatants advanced into the arena.

"Let them at it, the good combatants." And to it they went, these strange, iron-clad figures, while long shadows were falling over the terraced heights and soft-smiling plain.

It had been agreed that the battle should be fought out on foot to the deadly end; and the sturdy champion of the Court advanced against his taller adversary, lunged and thrust, driving back his man, who, covered with his buckler of steel, stood upon the defensive. Then, of a sudden, the latter raised his sword and aimed a downright blow. To a master of fence, such as Chataigneraie, this should have been the opportunity for a fatal thrust, as, in raising his arm, De Jarnac exposed the weakest point of his cuirass; but the suddenness, the irregularity of the attack, disconcerted the skilful fencer. The blow descended upon his thigh, he stumbled, was lost, for a second blow almost severed his limb from his body, and he fell bleeding upon the plain.

A breathless silence fell upon the multitude as De Jarnac, sword in hand, stood over his fallen foe. He would surely give him the coup de grace. But it was in terms of entreaty that De Jarnac cried to his prostrate foe: "Give me back my honour; own me a true man." The other glared at him, but answered not a word.

Then De Jarnac ran to where the King was sitting, pale and gloomy, in his state, and, falling upon his knees, he cried: "Sire, I give you La Chataigneraie, take him, but give me back my honour." The King remained mute.

Then De Jarnac returned to his bleeding antagonist, and conjured him, by their old friendship, to restore his honour, and accept his life at his hands. The wounded man made a desperate effort, rose to his knees, and aimed a fierce blow at the other, but fell down again helpless.

"Kill him!" cried De Jarnac's friends; but the good fellow had a tender heart, and could not do what was expected of him. He appealed again to the King, who again vouchsafed him not a word. Then, in his trouble, De Jarnac went to where Diane was sitting, cold and pitiless alike for friend or foe. "Ah, madame, you told me he would never forgive!"

And their champion was lying there bleeding to death, while this iron-hearted pair sat there mute and implacable! A movement of impatience and disgust passed through the whole assemblage. The King was moved at last. He called De Jarnac to him, and, in cold, set terms, pronounced that he had acted valiantly, and then hastily retired, leaving who would to succour the vanquished champion.

When King and Court had retired, a great tumult broke out. The Parisians had heard of the grand supper prepared in anticipation of the favourite's victory, and made a rush for the pavilions, where the tables were laid out, overturning and scattering it all, while nimble thieves secured the silver plate. The King let loose guards and archers upon the crowd; sword-thrusts and slashes were showered upon them. Some were left dead upon the field, while the main body of the Parisians dispersed in tumultuous flight towards their own city, many limping and half-disabled from wounds received in the affray. But, ever after, the survivors could talk of the famous "coup de Jarnac."

As for the unhappy Chataigneraie, he lay in the torture of his wounds, vainly hoping for some word of kindness—a message even from the King in whose cause he had fought. None such came, and, in his grief and rage, the poor wretch tore the bandages from his limb, and presently bled to death.

The Parisians have not forgotten the way to Saint Germain. They come in crowds sometimes, as at a fair that is held

at "Les Loges," a little clearing in the midst of the forest behind the château, where, at other times, a pleasant secluded track leads among the haunts of the deer and wild boar. For the chase still goes on at Saint Germain-en-Laye, with winding horns and baying dogs, and piqueurs in scarlet and gold, although the Kings—the old masters of the hunt—have departed to the shades.

There is a fine drive across the forest, by public "voiture" if one chooses, for an odd sixpence, to fishy little Poissy, charmingly placed upon the river, the double spires of the church showing over the trees; but not a charming place in itself, although the long bridge with its many arches and watermills at work between is an interesting sight. For here you come upon the Seine again, after it has made a tremendous double, enclosing some eleven thousand acres of forest, with villages, châteaux, and mansions within its ample fold.

Although the spire of Saint Denis may seem to beckon us from Saint Germain, yet it will be the easiest way to reach the venerable abbey through Paris itself.

There is one station that we pass between Saint Germain and Paris, that excites a certain curiosity. As the porters nonchalantly call out "Rueil," one thinks of the terrible Cardinal, who hereabouts had his dwelling—a veritable ogre's castle, secluded among the woods, with deep fosses, and lofty walls; where Richelieu would lie in ambush, till one day the victim would come riding gaily into the trap; and then, after short trial, and shorter shrift, in would come Monsieur de Paris to speed the traveller on his way. So we may remember the traditional guest for Rueil, who dines happily at a cabaret on his way, and meets with a pleasant, gentlemanly fellow, who cracks a bottle with him, and the pair become so friendly that, on leaving, the stranger whispers his name and destination. He is the headsman, and he is invited to meet Monsieur: Monsieur thereupon taking the hint, and saving himself in foreign parts.

The enceinte of the ogre's castle may perhaps be traced, but there is no other memorial left of the great Cardinal; except, indeed, the church, which he reconstructed and beautified, but which has been severely reconstructed since, and is now chiefly concerned with the monuments of the Beauharnois family; of Josephine, the Empress; of her daughter, Hortense, the

mother of the late Emperor. Malmaison is not far off—and may be reached by tram—with gardens, where Josephine loved to wander. She was dead ere the “hundred days” of her hero; and Napoleon visited the place sadly after Waterloo, and made his last adieux there to the veterans of his old guard. But perhaps one need not trouble oneself much about Malmaison, unless one is devoted to the Napoleonic legend.

When we come to Saint Denis—which, perhaps, has been painted in imagination as a stately kind of place, surrounded by quiet, gloomy avenues, befitting the storehouse of the royal bones—it is rather disappointing to find it just a suburb of Paris, and not much of a suburb at that. Saint Denis is industrial, manufacturing, and anything but regal in its surroundings. And though there is a fine west front to the abbey that puts into the shade the similar aspect of Westminster Abbey, yet it strikes us that on the whole our old English Kings are better lodged there, and there is nothing so authentic and venerable at Saint Denis as the tomb and shrine of the Confessor in our own Abbey. But then we have had no general clearance such as happened at Saint Denis, when the bones of all the old Kings were thrown to the winds, and their leaden coffins melted down for bullets. Still, for those who have faith, there are the tombs of the Kings; and we may recollect that the abbey has been a sacred place from very early times, with memories of Fredegonde and Dagobert, and lines of Carolings and Merovingians. Then we may remember the oriflamme, the sacred banner of France, that always reposed on the high altar of Saint Denis until the King should take the field in person. Curiously enough it was not the Crown that had the original right to the flag; for it was as the bannerers of Saint Denis that the Kings of France bore the plain red flag which in time came to be regarded as the symbol of the armed monarchy.

There is perhaps no more ancient gathering in existence than the fair of Saint Denis, which was chartered by Dagobert the First, A.D. 629, and has gone on ever since; no longer, indeed, the resort for merchants of every clime, but as much appreciated as ever by the consumers of “pain d’épices” and “plaisirs.”

Saint Denis lies low, in the centre of the river plain, but we come to hills presently; and on the top of the most prominent the

little town of Montmorency, which is something like Esher as far as situation goes. And, as we get a glimpse of Montmorency from Saint Germain, so now can we gain a view of the terraced heights of the home of the old French Kings. The fertile plain stretches out between, the river dimpling here and there, and its course marked out by lines of poplars and verdant prairies.

ON THE BALANCE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

It was the afternoon of a dull February day, and darkness was closing in all around, as we rode homewards together, Maude Bradford and I, after a long and exciting run with the Vineyard hounds. I had piloted my companion successfully through a somewhat difficult country; but we were still a good way from home. Our tired horses plodded slowly along at the pace that suited them best, while their riders forbore to press them; although these last were not without apprehensions of a scolding when they reached home, for being so late.

I had long been in love with Maude; but I had never before mustered courage to tell her as much. But now she looked so handsome and bewitching, and smiled upon me so kindly, that I tumbled into the avowal before I knew what I was about. And Maude was neither surprised nor angry. She blushed a little, smiled, looked down at the plashy road, and up at the murky sky—where a sulky gleam of sunlight still lingered—and then she turned to me with a happy light in her eyes that was not to be mistaken.

“It is all right with me, Frank,” she said, as I seized her disengaged hand; “but you will have to talk my father over first.”

Mr. Bradford had accompanied his daughter to the meet; but we had left him behind at the first fence, looking out for a gap which, it appeared, he could not find. No doubt he had ridden home, and would have something to say to us on our return. But at the next turn of the road we overtook him, and at the sight of him our horses’ heads diverged, and we rode a great deal further apart than before. But Mr. Bradford was in great good humour. He had managed to see a good deal of the run, by judicious short cuts along miry lanes, and he was so pleased with his own

performance that he looked indulgently upon our escapade.

"Come in to dinner, Frank," he cried, as we reached the grassy ride that led directly to the Grange, which the Bradfords had inhabited for several generations.

I had a mind to excuse myself, for I was weakly desirous of postponing the operation of "talking over" Mr. Bradford to a more propitious occasion; but an encouraging gesture from Maude made me accept the invitation.

Not that there was anything formidable about Mr. Bradford. Indeed, he was the best friend I ever had. He had been my guardian, and the trustee for the little property that I inherited from my mother; he had placed me in his bank when my education was finished, and was giving me a larger salary than perhaps I deserved. All the more, I felt that I was making an ungrateful return, in trying to win his only daughter, for whom he might fairly expect a more brilliant alliance. For, though I was well enough off, as a bachelor—could afford to keep a horse and take a day with the hounds occasionally—yet my annual budget was but a poor affair, after all. And, then, although, as far as family connections were concerned, I was, at least, equal to the Bradfords, yet there had been something queer about my father. He had come to grief in some way or other, and had left my mother to break her heart over his desertion. Not that she would acknowledge that he had deserted her. He had only gone away to find fortune and a home for her on the other side of the Atlantic.

But my mother never heard from him again, and I know that his neglect brought her to the grave. Yet, to the last, she loved him, and wore a portrait of him always in a locket next her heart. On her deathbed she gave me this locket, and made me promise that, if ever my father and I came to meet, I would be a dutiful son to him—a promise that I made with some reservations, for I had come to hate him for his neglect of her, and had promised myself that, when I came to be a man, I would make him suffer for what she had endured. But these boyish impressions had grown feeble now, and, with the advent of my passion for Maude, had almost disappeared, and my chief anxiety was lest her father should make it a point against me, that I might prove, after all, "a chip of the old block;" for

I had heard people say "how like young Forester grows to his father."

Dinner at the Grange passed quietly enough. There were no other guests, and Mr. Bradford retailed the various episodes of the day's hunting to his wife, who smiled pleasantly, and now and then put in a word, which was all her husband wanted to keep him going. Maude was even more nervous than I, and when she followed her mother from the room, and I ventured to squeeze her hand in passing, she gave me an anxious, half-frightened glance, as she whispered, "Don't be long." And then, screwing up my courage, I took a seat at Mr. Bradford's side, and plunged at once into what I had to say.

With his head supported on his hand, Mr. Bradford listened to me in silence, gravely, and even sorrowfully, it seemed to me.

"My dear boy," he said, when I had finished my story, "I ought to have foreseen this, and prevented it. But, after all, perhaps it is only a young man's fancy—and a girl's. Can't you give it up?"

I shook my head, and was in the way of explaining what a vital affair it was for both of us, when he interrupted me.

"I will take all that for granted, Frank, and, if that were all, I don't think I should prove hard-hearted. But if you persevere you will drive me into explanations that may be painful to both of us."

With that he rose and, unlocking a drawer in his escritoire, drew out a small parchment-covered volume.

"Frank," resumed Mr. Bradford, laying his hand kindly on my arm, "I am going to give you a proof of my complete confidence in your honour and trustworthiness. I have the reputation of being a rich man. If I were, I should like nothing better than to make you young people happy. Well, here is my last balance-sheet, which no other eye but mine has yet seen. Look it over and judge for yourself."

To this I demurred. Mr. Bradford's balance-sheet was nothing to the affection which existed between Maude and myself. If he were not so rich as people thought, then all the better, as far as I was concerned, for there would be less inequality between us. Still Mr. Bradford urged me to read the document before me. Say that he wanted my advice as an expert. Well, on this ground, I could not refuse to glance at his schedule.

At first sight, the document seemed of

a highly satisfactory character. It struck me that the item of cash in hand and at call was rather small, considering the amount of liabilities. But with an institution that enjoyed the solid credit of Bradford's old bank, perhaps it was not necessary to keep a large reserve of coin. Anyhow, there was a comfortable balance in Mr. Bradford's favour of about a hundred thousand pounds. But a rapid glance at the assets that made up the satisfactory balance, suggested certain misgivings: "Freehold and leasehold properties, valued at £70,000. Reversionary interests, estimated at £30,000."

"Will it do, Frank?" asked Mr. Bradford, with a keen glance at my face.

The only objection I could make was, that perhaps too much capital was locked up in the above items.

"You have hit the blot," Frank, said Mr. Bradford, smiling grimly. "The seventy thousand pounds is represented by a mortgage on the Thunderstone Collieries, in the county of Derby—that is, by some waste land, rusty machinery, and a couple of shafts half-full of water. The thirty thousand pounds' worth of reversions consists of sundry insurance policies for that amount, on the life of the former proprietor of the Thunderstone mines. This last asset is an expensive one, as it costs me a thousand a year to keep up the policies. You ask me, perhaps," said Mr. Bradford, warmly, "how I could have been mad enough to make such advances upon worthless securities? I reply, that I was deceived by one in whom I placed implicit reliance—just as I am placing implicit reliance upon you, Frank—and that man was your father. He it was who robbed me of my money, and left me with this fearful burden on my shoulders."

"And where is he now?" I asked, in a voice full of bitterness against the man who had brought sorrow and destruction upon all about him.

"That I don't know," replied Mr. Bradford. "The insurance offices pay him a small annuity just to keep him alive, and to have evidence of his existence. I have heard that he acts as croupier in a gaming house."

"You see, Frank," continued Mr. Bradford, in compassionate tones, "there is only one chance for us—I may get a rich partner. The business of the bank is sound and profitable, my credit is unimpaired; but at the first shock, or crisis, down we go. Well, I have got a chance.

John Barraclough, who is worth, you know, half a million, has suggested my taking his son Henry as a partner. Henry is much attached to Maude, and I should have said, before this affair of yours, that Maude was decidedly well-disposed to him. Well, if this match can be arranged, Henry will bring in a capital of fifty thousand pounds, and the old bank will be put beyond the reach of danger. We won't forget you either, Frank. After a time you shall be brought in as a junior partner."

But this was a little too much to bear. I must give up my darling, that was inevitable; but to be asked to sell her—to renounce her love for so many pounds a year—this was beyond endurance.

"Whatever my father may have been," I said, hotly, "I am a man of honour. I no longer ask you for your daughter; but I can't stay here to see her sold to another, and share in the profits of the sale. As soon as you can replace me, I will leave the bank, and seek my fortune elsewhere."

Mr. Bradford shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, if that is how you choose to take it, Frank, there is nothing more to be said. But you must not speak to Maude in your present excited state. I will make your excuses, and after a night's rest you will, perhaps, see the matter in a more reasonable light."

And he rang the bell in a dignified way to order a dogcart to take me home. But I preferred to walk, and left the house at once, finding the mizzling rain and dark, murky way in sufficient harmony with my present feelings.

Presently appeared the lights of Market Mellish gleaming over the bare hedges, and before long I found myself in the high-street of that little town.

In the centre of the high-street stood the old bank, a warm, cheerful, red brick house of considerable size, which Mr. Bradford had occupied himself, in his younger days. Here I had been allotted, by the kindness of Mr. Bradford, a couple of handsome rooms; while the rest of the house was occupied by our head clerk, Absolon, who was charged with the safety of the premises. Mrs. Absolon looked after my domestic comforts. She was a bright, bustling little woman, and generally brought an atmosphere of cheerfulness about with her. But this night, as she came into my room, where I sat brooding over the fire, she looked quite serious.

"Oh, Mr. Frank," she began, "I had such an upset this afternoon. It was just

about dusk, and I saw a gentleman walking on the other side of the street, and he looked up at the windows; but, dear me!" she cried, noticing my woebegone expression, "have you seen him, too?"

"Seen whom?" I cried, with an attempt at my usual manner. "I have seen fifty, more or less, and if you were at the window, Mrs. Absolon, I don't wonder at anybody looking up at it."

"Now, none of your nonsense, Mr. Frank. This is a serious business. It was your father, I am sure—poor Colonel Forester. And he didn't look much older either, and just as beautifully dressed as he used to be, with a flower in his button-hole, and all! Oh, he was a charming man, your papa, Mr. Frank; but still the seeing him unexpected like gave me quite a shock. And I have been expecting all the evening to hear his knock at the door!"

Just at this moment a sharp double knock resounded through the house, and Mrs. Absolon gave a little scream of terror. But the knock only announced a telegram after all, which I opened according to standing orders. It was an American cablegram, and bore the succinct message: "Dead certainty, proofs by mail." I sent off the message to the Grange. This little event had roused me, and I began energetically to make preparations for departure, while Mrs. Absolon looked on amazed as I gave her hurried instructions about this and that. "Now, mind, I must have all my things home by Saturday, and send round and tell young Blake he can have Chancellor for seventy guineas. And the dogs; yes, I must find a home for the dogs."

Mrs. Absolon's amazement gave place to indignation.

"Home for the dogs!" she cried. "Why, they've got a home, and it would break my heart to part with the dear creatures. And, as for selling Chancellor, you shan't do it, Mr. Frank. Where will you get another horse as will suit you so well? I see how it is. You have had a tiff with the old gentleman, and it's to be havoc and ruin everywhere. But you wait; to-morrow will tell a different tale. And I shan't send word to the laundress about your things neither, Mr. Frank. And just as your father has come home with his fortune made, and everybody's to be happy and comfortable."

The good woman's last words struck me, with a thought that such a thing was just within the bounds of possibility. But it was utterly unlikely; and Mrs. Absolon had

been deceived, no doubt, by some point of fancied resemblance. Anyhow, I did not slacken in my preparations for departure. Not another night would I sleep in the house, which would doubtless soon be occupied by Maude and her future husband. And, when morning came, I was ready for a start, but in what direction I had not made up my mind. But I went round the old place, took an affectionate leave of Chancellor and the dogs, and then found my way to the old churchyard, which sloped so pleasantly down to the winding valley, to pay a last visit to my mother's grave. Strange to say, the wet turf already, early as it was, bore marks of fresh footsteps—somebody had left a little bunch of flowers there, on the flat stone slab—white, exotic flowers.

But all this was driven out of my head when I reached the bank-house. A carriage from the Grange was standing at the door, and Mrs. Absolon was looking out for me with a triumphant expression.

"There's somebody waiting to see you upstairs, Mr. Frank." And as I darted up two steps at a time, she called out: "What about Chancellor and the dogs, Mr. Frank, have you found a home for them yet?"

And on the threshold of my sitting-room stood Maude, blushing, radiant; and, as I clasped her in my arms, she whispered:

"It is all right, Frank. You are to forget what papa said last night. He has sent me to make his peace with you, and bring you home to breakfast."

Ah, what a happy morning that was after our night of misery! For Maude had been as wretched as myself. When I had gone away, without a word to her, she had been in the depths of desolation, and her father's manner, gloomy and morose, had convinced her that there was no more hope for us. But in the morning all was different. Happiness had come in sleep, although she had hardly slept a wink. Some good news had changed her father's disposition.

Happy! how could we be otherwise, with our own hearts' desire, and all the charm and enchantment of love's young dream? Yet, through it all there sounded a note of doubt and dread; in my ears, at least, for Mr. Bradford's revelations had shown me how thin was the crust on which we were standing. And presently I was told the news which had changed Mr. Bradford's views so suddenly. He had kept it back from me at first, for it was

not news at which I ought properly to rejoice. But the American telegram was from an agent he had employed to ascertain with certainty what had become of my father, and by the news of his death Mr. Bradford would be the richer by thirty thousand pounds, as well as relieved from the burdensome yearly payments. The thousand a year he thus saved he would give to his son-in-law and daughter, and, with replenished coffers, the bank would enter upon a career of increased prosperity. But the proofs were the thing, the proofs of the identity of the deceased; which, when they arrived, did not prove thoroughly convincing, somehow, to the representatives of the Insurance Companies. Further evidence was called for, and this caused delay and anxiety.

But there seemed to be no reason why the wedding should be postponed. Mr. Bradford, having once given his consent, was anxious that the affair should be quickly concluded. Marriages in May everybody knew to be unlucky, and why should people marry in May when they might marry in April? So for an early day in April the wedding was fixed.

As a preliminary, a partnership deed was signed by Bradford and myself, and, from that moment, my anxieties became most poignant. There was a grand dinner party at the Grange, followed by a ball, to celebrate the event and in honour of the approaching wedding. All the best people of the county were there, and nearly all the chief magnates were condescending enough to congratulate me, and to assure me that the confidence, so long reposed in the old bank, would be strengthened and confirmed by my accession to the firm. But there was one conspicuous absentee, and that was Mr. John Barraclough, who had intended his son to marry Maude, and settle down to business. Still, he had taken Mr. Bradford's excuses very well, and had promised that the little misunderstanding should not affect in any way their business relations. For all that, I fancied that our friend was a vindictive kind of man and would do us an ill turn if he could.

And, although I tried my utmost to be as gay and jubilant as be seemed my position, I could not help seeing the skeleton that sat with us at the banquet and waltzed in and out among the dancers, or realising how the people, who now showed us so much consideration, might, in a few weeks' time, be reproaching us as rogues and vagabonds.

Quickly enough followed our wedding-day and the honeymoon in Paris, which, bright and happy as it was, still was for me overshadowed by suspense and anxiety. We had constant news from home, and all of a cheering, pleasant character. But the Insurance Companies had not settled, and a private letter from Absolon conveyed the somewhat disquieting report that an agent of the Companies' had been in the town making enquiries as to a rumour that had somehow got about, that my father had recently been seen very much alive and in perfect health in his native place.

"But it all turned out baseless," added Absolon, "and if they don't soon pay up we will make them."

In the same hotel with us were staying another newly-married couple, whose goings and comings excited much more attention than ours. The newspapers recorded their movements with ornamental flourishes, visitors arrived blocking the courtyard with their carriages; journalists came to interview Colonel Woodward, the renowned American financier and millionaire; the costume and appearance of the charming American bride was the subject of constant comment. An accidental meeting in the lobby of a theatre revealed the fact that Maude and Mrs. Woodward had been schoolfellows for a short time in England, and a strong and sentimental friendship sprang up between the two young women. The American was a pretty, lively, amusing creature, and an excellent companion for Maude, who went about with her everywhere. The Colonel himself was rarely in their company. Maude described him as grave and grey, but very well got up for an elderly man. The Colonel and I had exchanged formal visits, but we had never met. I fancied that he avoided me; but there was no particular reason why we should seek each other's society, and he was generally occupied all day long in receiving official and financial people.

Whenever I returned to our hotel, after the shortest absence, I was sure to make particular enquiries as to letters and telegrams, always dreading some bad news. But my partner continued to write in excellent spirits—"One or two good accounts had been opened. The crops were looking well, and there was every prospect of a good year." But, one afternoon, a telegram awaited me: "Return home, business complications feared." I felt that the very worst must have happened; complications meant ruin. We must leave by the train

from Paris that evening. My wife, I was told, was in the apartments of Mrs. Woodward. I ran to seek her and bid her prepare for immediate departure. The Colonel's servant admitted me. He was sure the two ladies would return in a few minutes. I sat down in the gaily-decorated salon to await their arrival, and, to pass the time, took up a book of photographs. There was the Colonel's bride, in every variety of pose and costume; there was the Colonel's yacht; there were the Colonel's famous trotting-horses; but where was the Colonel himself? Why, here, in proud humility, at the very end of the volume; the Colonel himself, with his shrewd, enquiring, watchful air; and again, as if to show his wife what a handsome young fellow he had been, the same Colonel—he must have been only a lieutenant then—with curled ambrosial whiskers. But what was it that struck me all of a heap, as I examined this last portrait? Why, the conviction that it was perfectly familiar to me; that it was the facsimile of the miniature, mounted in a locket, which my mother had given me on her death-bed, and which I always carried with me.

I tore the photograph from the book and took it to the window to compare the two more fully. As I did so I heard a slight noise behind me, and there stood the Colonel, watching my proceedings with a strange look on his face. As I turned, he drew a revolver from his pocket and covered me with it.

"Put up your hands, you scoundrel!"

"You are mistaken, Colonel Forester," I rejoined, with as much calmness as I was master of, with that ugly weapon turned full upon me. "I am not a thief. If you kill me it will be murder; and you have guilt enough upon your soul without that."

"What in thunder do you mean?" exclaimed the Colonel, dropping the muzzle of his weapon, but keeping his finger on the trigger.

"Do you deny that you are the original of this portrait; that you are Colonel Forester?"

"If you know that you know too much," he cried, and fired upon me at once.

But the shot was fired an inch or two too high, and just cut off a lock of hair, without injuring the scalp. Next minute I had closed with him, and tried to wrest the pistol from his grasp. In the struggle, our worst passions were aroused. I wrested the pistol from his grasp, and was about to strike him with the butt-end of it

on the head, when, to my excited vision, a hand appeared to be stretched between us—a shadowy hand—but one that I recognised as my mother's. I flung the pistol to the other end of the room.

"Forgive me," I said, loosening my grasp. "I forgot my promise to her."

The Colonel sank back upon a couch, looking white and scared.

"What, are you her son and mine! Are you Frank Forester? Well, I own up. I have been a scoundrel, perhaps, but not quite so bad as you would make me out. If I seemed to desert her, it was because I had sunk too low to hope to claim her. And when fortune turned, it was too late. And now I am started in a new existence, and I don't want to be haunted by the ghosts of the past."

"That was all very well," I replied; but he must do justice to the man he had plundered, whose ruin was now imminent, and would involve his daughter and son-in-law in the same evil fate.

The Colonel sat and pondered. At last he said:

"Look here, Frank, chuck in those life-policies, and that thundering mine, that old Bradford ought to have made something of, and I'll give you a bill for a hundred thousand pounds, which is about what I lifted from your father-in-law. Now sit down, and make out your contract note, and, as time presses, I'll write a bill for the dollars. And after that we go our ways, and know each other no more."

Just as the Colonel had handed me this bill, and I had given him an undertaking to transfer the Thunderstone Collieries and sundry policies of assurance to his possession, Maude and Mrs. Woodward appeared in the doorway.

"Your husband and me's been having a deal," said the Colonel, shaking hands. "Sorry to lose you so soon. My dear, you'll have to take leave of your friend. Sorry to lose you; but we'll meet again, in the old country, perhaps."

We have not met yet. But the bill was all right. I got Rothschilds to endorse it to their London house, and away we went for home as fast as train and steamer could carry us. At Dover we were met by a special messenger from the bank, with a confidential despatch, enjoining me to see our London agents and use the most powerful representations to get them to honour our bills now falling due.

It was John Barraclough who had made all the mischief, and Bradford added that

if assistance were not forthcoming before morning, the bank would not open its doors.

But, as things turned out, I walked into Messrs. Whatman and Wilkins's, in Lombard Street, our agents, with a jolly, assured air, left a handsome cover for all forthcoming bills, and then away for home, with Maude by my side, and, as a foot-stool, a bag filled with gold and Bank of England notes.

Already the telegraph had put dear old Bradford's mind at ease; and the old bank opened its doors next morning without anybody knowing how near it had been to a total collapse.

We never discovered, by the way, who it was who so closely resembled the Colonel, that his death was so nearly accepted as that of his double. But it certainly was my father who had visited our town and left the bunch of flowers on my mother's grave. And I believe that the little gift was remembered in his favour when he stood in peril of his life at the hands of his son.

LOUIS DRAYCOTT.

By MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

Author of "Geoffrey Stirling," etc. etc.

CHAPTER VIII. UNDER SENTENCE.

WITH the death of the victim of Rebecca's sudden and unreasoning anger, a complete change came over the mental attitude of Louis Draycott. It was not that he for a moment forgot the sorrow and the blight that had fallen upon his own hopes, his own dreams of "a day to be," that now should never be; but a new set of impulses and anxieties came to the front. That strange element in the tie of marriage, undefinable yet all powerful—that fealty which overrides all sense of wrong or even of outrage—was changing the current of the man's thoughts and feelings, filling his days with care, his nights with dread.

True, the woman he married had not been loved by Louis Draycott with the absorbing passion that came after; but she had been part of his life; she had lain in his bosom, and walked by his side. He had prayed over her sins and her backslidings; had hoped against hope; had despaired, hoped again, again grown desperate. But, however things had been between them, the thread of her life had been interwoven with his; and, as the wife who has been outraged and made

miserable by a husband's sins, yet when the man lies dead before her, sees only the lover of her youth, the father of her children in that still, recumbent form that can never wound or hurt her any more; as she forgets all the black hiatus that lies between her bridal joy and the day of her widowhood; so Louis Draycott forgot the wrong, and the shame, and the misery, only remembering that this woman had been his wife; nay, was his wife, and that he must use every power he possessed, and strain every energy, to save her from a terrible fate.

That she stood, a fatal barrier, between himself and the woman he loved with every fibre of his being he had known from the beginning; but yet it was a strange fact that this aspect of her life and of her possible death had grown so dim to him since he knew that she was menaced by a horrible danger, as to count for nothing with him; and, stranger still, perhaps, with Mazie.

Watching the two, in this most dreadful crisis of their lives, Aunt Dacie was often touched, even to tears, by the absolute selflessness of both, often struck with Mazie's marvellous likeness to that dear Lucille, whose single-minded earnestness had been so striking, whose powers of devotion and endurance so proven by the way in which she met all the trials and triumphs, the joys and sorrows of her life.

The spirit of the mother seemed to have descended upon the child. As unselfish, as strong—even in weakness—as tender, as helpful, was Mazie now. Not that she, any more than Louis, forgot; not that the black cloud of the parting that must be, did not sometimes loom so darkly in her eyes, that she was fain to cover them from the sight; but, for the moment, the thought of, and fear for, Rebecca dwarfed all else.

Her thoughts returned again and again, dwelling long and closely on that strange interview in the prison, when the hard heart had softened to her, the hard eyes moistened to a tear.

Each word, each look, each smallest incident of that strange interview had Mazie told to Louis Draycott, he listening not without amaze, nor yet without thankfulness. Maybe he would have hesitated, had Mazie asked his permission to seek out this woman who could never more be wife of his, and yet who must for ever come between his fair, sweet love and him. But he read the heart of his darling, and knew with what noble intent the

task from which many a woman would have shrunk, had been undertaken; had recognised, too, how the effort had been blessed; how the bitterness in Mazie's sorrow had been done away; and how Rebecca had been redeemed by the touch of the "live coal" from off the altar of a glowing human heart.

She had told him, even weeping, of the girl's visit; of her gentleness, her tenderness, her pleadings. She had spoken of the past with penitence, and of all the ill she had wrought her husband with remorse; and then, with a quaint-enough rebound into the old abrupt modes of expression, said to him: "I'm sorry—I've—turned up again. She's a good sort; she was very good to me. I tell you I'm sorry I've turned up again to baulk her." After this she huddled herself together in the old sullen fashion, nor could they get her to speak again that day.

But the fit passed, and she took to longing for the comings of the Chaplain, as the sick long for the dawn after the darkness and weariness of the night. She had jeered and gibed at him about the possibility of her life paying forfeit for her crime, had twitted him with villainous suggestions of his own possible satisfaction in seeing the obstacle to his union with Mazie thus set aside; but now her mocking was hushed, her hard spirit humbled; her constant cry:

"I did not mean to kill her; the knife lay on the table handy, or I should never have done it. She laughed when I said I was a lady once, and I wanted to punish her; but I didn't mean to kill her. I'm sorry she's dead. She had a child, had 'Liza; and it used to cry for her all the time when she was out. It will have to cry loud to wake her now. I'm sorry she's dead. I tell you I didn't mean to kill her."

The other prisoners got tired enough of hearing this miserable litany chanted incessantly. As for the Chaplain, it rang in his ears night and day.

"We can do nothing," he said to Mazie, "until the coroner's jury have given a verdict. They will sit to-morrow."

It was a time of terrible strain and tension. What would he have done without Mazie—without the love that never failed him, the hand that clasped his so tenderly, the lips that uttered such brave words of counsel and of courage?

Even in the midst of such sorrow and anxiety as pressed upon him now, there were moments in which her exceeding

preciousness came cruelly home to him, forcing from him a lament over the tearing asunder that must come.

Once he framed her sweet face in both his hands, looking down into the fond and faithful eyes until his own grew blind with tears.

"Little woman," he said, with a long indrawn breath that told of the tumult in his breast, "little woman, how I shall think of you and long for you in the days when you shall be set far from me!"

And what answer could Mazie give to such a plaint as that, save her tears?

But these outbursts were rare during this time of waiting. The one absorbing event in each day to Louis Draycott was his visit to the prison-cell where Rebecca dreed her weary weird. The time would come when the pain of parting with the woman he loved would bear down all before it; but that time was not yet. The mere fact that a soul in sorrow looked to him for comfort, that one of God's creatures in deadly fear turned to him for strength and consolation, was sufficient to close the avenues of feeling in other directions, to deaden and dull the pain of personal suffering, as in hospital practice they say that one pain "masks" another. The pain is still there, but it is not felt so acutely, because another and newer form of suffering thrusts it into abeyance for the time being.

And Rebecca was indeed in these days, as Miss Johnstone the warden put it, "a handful." One hour she would be elated with utterly groundless hope; the next "floored," as she herself expressed it, so that uneasy and perpetual watch was kept through the spy-hole, lest she should try to do herself a mischief; at nights she would wail until the prisoners near at hand took to knocking on their doors, by way of intimating that they couldn't stand the din any longer. Now she would make wonderful resolutions as to what she would do if she "got clear." Now she would call up the most ghastly details of her possible execution, and implore the Chaplain to "stand by her to the last." One day she would be so sullen no one could get a word out of her; the next she would for ever mutter like a person in delirium—scaring the Matron by telling her how, in the middle of the night, a flood of light, "like heaven," had flashed into the cell, and how, from the midst of the blinding radiance, "the lady's" face had looked at her, "the lady's" hand had beckoned to her. In a word, haunted by all the morbid

and hysterical ideas to which a mind, weakened by excess of any kind, is ever a prey, she may truly have been said to be "all things by turns and nothing long." Her condition was pitiable indeed.

If, as Michelet tells us, "the truest priest is the man who has seen, learned, and suffered much, and who has at last found in his own heart the gentle words needed for the comfort and healing of others," then may Louis Draycott well have been looked upon as the fittest man to deal with such a case as hers. His patience never failed; his tenderness knew no "shadow of turning."

She grew to listen for the sound of his footstep, as the faithful dog listens for the step of his master, hushing her moaning and her muttering as the hour drew near that would bring him; sitting still as a statue, with her eyes fixed upon the door, her hands wrung the one in the other in an agony of impatience.

They used to look at her through the disc, marvelling to each other upon her strange demeanour, even somehow getting over their dislike and aversion, and now and again showing little acts of kindness towards her which, in her present mood, she was quick enough to recognise and be grateful for.

But we are letting the clock run on too fast, for this state of things came about after Rebecca knew that 'Liza was dead.

It was the Chaplain himself who told her when the news came to the prison. It was his firm and gentle hands that held her as she cried aloud, trying to dash herself against the walls of the cell; his voice that calmed her, at last, after long striving. He spared himself in nothing; he had no thought for himself; but those who looked on saw the havoc the long strain was making with health and strength; noted the sharpening of each feature; the haggard eyes that looked as though the healing hand of sleep was never laid across them; noted the change in the resonant, bell-like voice that had once rung so clear and sweet through the dreary prison chapel.

"The Chaplain speaks as if he was tired-like," said George, with a portentous shake of the head. "He's not the man he was, isn't the Chaplain, and that there she-yarmin't's the bottom of it all."

"But, George," said more tender-hearted Bessy, "she can't help being alive, you know."

"Well, I don't know," replied the gate-keeper, "I hold to people sayin' of a

thing and stickin' to it. Yo' see, Mrs. Mogeridge, she said she wur dead, and she'd oughter have stuck to it—there's nothin' like being in one tale. I've no patience wi' folk as don't know their own minds, and don't rightly know if they're living or dead. I've no patience wi' Becca, as yo' call her."

"No, I know you haven't," said Bessy, gently; "but I think you would have, if you could see her—she's that sad and sorry-like, it 'ud go to your heart, I know."

"No 'twouldn't; my heart bean't so easy got at as all that; not but what it's a tender enough heart when you do get at it," he added, with an uneasy glance at Bessy; "and no one knows better what it's made of than that young rascal of yours, Mrs. Mogeridge. He makes a reg'lar fool o' me, does Bobby, same as he does o' Joseph Stubbs—strokin' his back t' wrong way 'oop, and takin' all manner o' freedom wi' 'im."

"You're very good to Bobby, George, I know," said Bobby's mother, smiling, as she went her way.

George watched her down the corridor, until she turned the corner. Then he went into the gate-house, and sat down in the high-backed chair by the fireplace. George was full of thought, and took no heed of Joseph Stubbs, who put himself alarmingly out of the perpendicular, the better to rub his back up against his master's legs.

"I wish father were here to gi' me a bit of his mind on't," he muttered, presently; then, with all an artist's pride in his work, he looked round the walls of the little room. "One would think them picters might do a lot towards makin' a woman take a fancy to a place—so one would—let alone the man as put 'em there. It warn't an easy job, and had to have a lot o' mind put into it, as father could say if he wur' here. I don't mean to be proud, but I'm of a mind to think there's not a-many could have fitted 'em in so neat and so suitable. A man must have gifts as could wrestle wi' a job like that. The thing is, to make other folk see a man's gifts in the proper light."

George was not the only one who mourned over the change in the Chaplain. From the Governor himself to a certain little wizened tailor—who, by dint of careful conduct, had won the privilege of cleaning out the cells, and doing other active work about the prison—there was but one feeling among all classes: a deep sorrow for the man who had made himself the main-

spring of all that was good, sympathetic, and helpful within those gloomy walls. It had been bad enough news to learn that the Chaplain was going to leave them, that he was bound for an African mission. But it was worse to see him fade and change like this.

"Happen he'll go on a longer journey than to that place we've heard tell on, if things goes on like this," said the wizened little "cleaner," and though the warders told him to hold his tongue, and "shut up sharp," they exchanged significant looks behind his back, as who should say:

"Even that shrimp may speak the truth sometimes, mind you."

As for the man round whom all this interest and all these fears centred, it was small thought, indeed, if any, that he gave to himself. If now and again a sense of exhaustion came upon him, he fought it off by sheer force of will; and Mazie hardly realised how cruelly the daily and hourly tension was telling upon him, for in her presence he was strengthened. The touch of her hand had magic for him; face to face with the sweetness of her tenderness, he forgot to be weary.

Perhaps he had never himself realised how worn and haggard he had grown to look until the night before the inquest; when, passing by a mirror in the street, he caught sight of his own full-length figure. The dragging step, the stooping shoulders, the tired, white face, struck him strangely.

He made his way home, forgot to take any food, sat for awhile absorbed in thought of the tremendous issues of the day to come, lay down, dressed as he was, upon his bed, and almost in a moment passed into that hazy land that is neither sleep nor waking, yet partakes of both, and is the outcome of utter exhaustion both of mind and body.

Dream follows dream, phantasies of the past rise up before him in torturing distinctness.

Now he is an undergraduate again. It is early morning, and in the stately calm of Merton Chapel he listens to the voice of praise and prayer. The old days come back so vividly that the very train of thought that used to seethe and bubble in his mind then, is reproduced now; the old tumult of thought in which this "party" in the Church or that, seemed to appeal to his sympathies, chime in with his convictions, and claim his adherence; the old

longing for a wider leading out beyond and above them all—the old yearning to be led to see that the earth was the Lord's, and not the devil's, that God was a loving Father, not a cruel taskmaster.

Freshness of anticipation, a young heart's elastic spirit of hope, these made life seem fair to look upon, in spite of the puzzles that met him in it here and there.

How it all came back to him!—the deep amber glow through the east window; the young heads bowed; the twittering of the birds in the quad outside; a sentence from the prayer used on Commemoration Days, "Be not sorry as men that have no hope."

Now, in his fancy, he is waiting in Aunt Dacie's parlour—waiting in "the heart of the house" for the heart of his life to come to him. A few moments more and she will be there, close beside him, nestling to his heart, his arms about her; her lips will touch his, and cling there as the joy of meeting thrills him through and through. She is coming; she is singing as she comes.

But why does she not come? Even the echo of her voice is dying away—the little room grows dark; he gropes and stumbles, and wakes cold and trembling, to find a warder standing by his bed, to realise that he has lain there through the night and on into the morning, and that the inquest will begin in little more than an hour.

"You was so heavy like, I didn't like to wake you, sir," says the man, speaking gently, and with all the pity and tenderness rough men will show at such times. "I've been in twice before; and, please sir, the Matron has your coffee ready, and I was to say you'd got some way to go; and would you be pleased, sir, to come and see the—the female prisoner, sir, before you start? She's been raving-like all night, and crying out as she heard the girl 'Liza's child crying all the time, so as naught could still it. I'm sorry, sir, to have to trouble you like this; but that's the message as they sent."

Less than two hours later, Louis Draycott was standing in the blinding sunshine, grasping Dumphie's arm, and staggering like a drunken man, while the crowd which had gathered round the door of the place where the inquest had been held, fell back to give him air.

The Coroner's jury had returned a verdict of "Wilful Murder" against Rebecca Fordyce Draycott.